



Two different views expressed

Note: Without knowing last week's column would be on the subject of coyotes, one of our members prepared the following column on predators. We received a comment on the coyote column. So both of these contributions are printed below, presenting somewhat different views on the coyote situation.

Beck Mt. News Nov 26, 81 on role of coyotes

Lack of understanding is usually the reason people fear wild animals. It is also the reason some people have the urge to kill the predator that attacks small, seemingly harmless animals. The hawk, roadrunner, shrike, coyote, bobcat and fox, to name a few, all prey upon other smaller, defenseless animals. We are shocked when we see some larger animal pounce upon a smaller one and kill it. It isn't a pleasant sight, but we must realize this is the predator's way of surviving, and in doing this keeps a balance in nature. Without these predators the population of other animals would so greatly increase that our homes, ranches and gardens would be overrun by mice, pack rats, ground squirrels, rabbits and lizards.

There have been many examples of the lack of understanding this natural balancing of nature. For example some years ago, on the Kaibab Plateau north of the Grand Canyon, wildlife managers thought they would help the deer population if they destroyed some of the mountain lions in this area. The deer population consequently became so large that it outgrew the available food supply. Deer were dying a

slow and tortuous death by starvation — hardly preferable to former times when mountain lions culled out the old and sick.

There have been instances in our country when wild animals have attacked people, but in every case these attacks have been under unnatural circumstances. The attacking animal has been cornered, had lost its sense of fear of humans, or suffered from disease, usually rabies. (Wonder if the author would concede a point on grizzlies? Ed.) This can also happen to domesticated animals such as dogs and cats.

Healthy wild animals will avoid people. Without question, many more people are attacked by dogs than by wild predators of all kinds? So let's protect our wild treasures!

describe my own love/hate relationship with the varmints. It's part of the joy of desert living to have them around for occasional serenades and sightings and I wouldn't have them eradicated for the world, but they effect enough grief and loss as it is without being emboldened by hand-outs from the coyote worshippers.

Coyotes are opportunists and survivors. They thrive despite upsets in the balance of nature, and yet unbalance my efforts at "homesteading." Pack rats make a shamble of my storage sheds and ground squirrels wipe out the potted plants on my porch, because my remaining cats are only allowed outside in mid-day under escort. Coyotes 4 - cats 0.

Nothing keeps down flies in a horse corral like contentedly-scratching chickens, yet my poultry has to be securely penned 24 hours because you never know when the coyotes will come cruising through. And I didn't particularly care for the neighbors' poodle that was carried off by a pack one night. But it's a rough way for a dog to go.

What I'm doing is trying to defend my right to defend my critters, which is just as natural as the coyotes' inclination for raiding. Last year I plugged a particularly audacious (or stupid) warmint in the act of sapping my chicken pen in broad daylight, and revenge was sweet. However, I had to plead manifest destiny to one coyote cultist who protested, "but it's their land!" The local coyote feeders can share responsibility for the demise of their little buddy.

Conversely, I'm very much against the use of 1080 and cyanide bait, and wholesale slaughter in general, especially in this area where we don't have large sheep operations anymore. Where coyotes are a serious problem to deer and antelope fawns, I'd encourage recreational varmint-callers with a token bounty. The coyotes can survive some reasonable control, and they certainly don't need any supplements.